

SCHOOLSCAPES

WORKING TOGETHER
TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS

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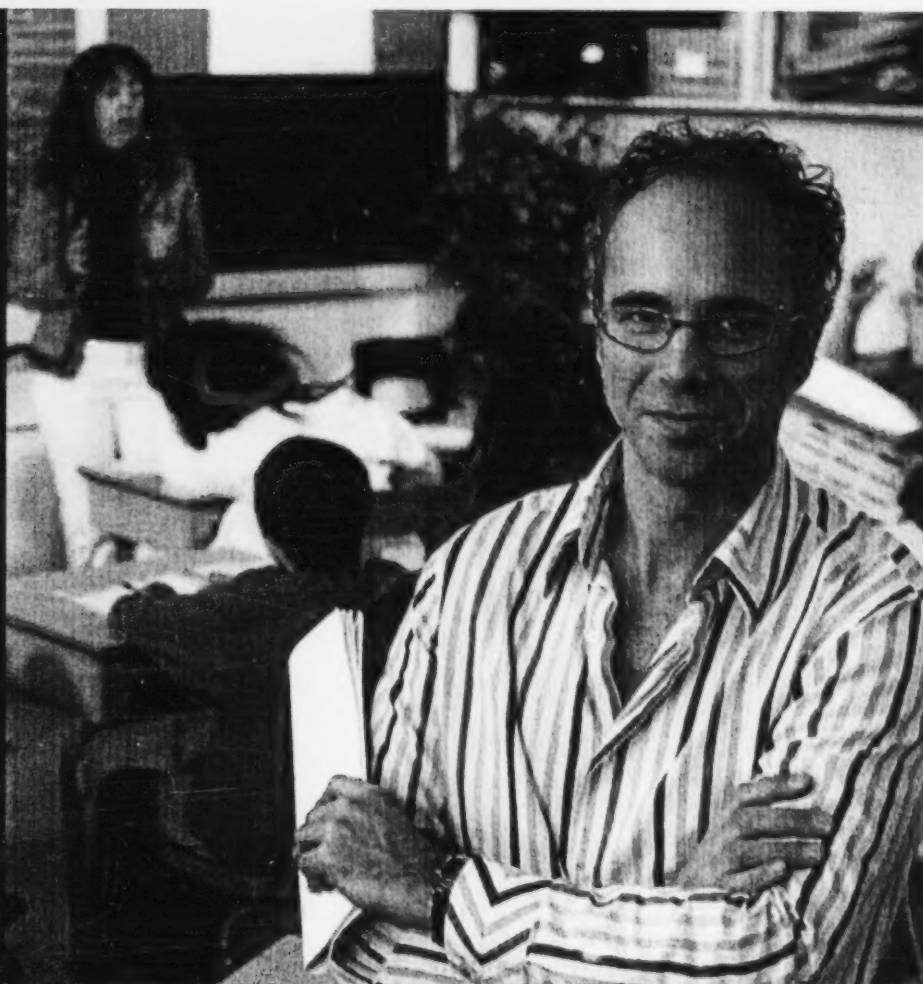
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Québec 

ince its creation eight years ago, *Schoolscapes* has been providing you with an overview of provincial study days on the education reform and training sessions of resource persons. Once again, this edition of *Schoolscapes* presents a summary of the activities held during the last two major meetings on education reform, namely the provincial meeting on October 25 and 26, the theme of which was leadership and support, and the training session held on November 29 and 30, where participants discussed the planning of learning and evaluation activities and support and guidance.

While the reform requires the commitment of many players, actual implementation relies mainly on teachers. Development, evaluation, adaptation and concerted action are just some of the key words featured in the reference framework for competencies published in 2001 by the Ministère de l'Éducation. Is the content of this document pure theory or does it present a realistic means of defining the role of teachers? How can the concepts put forward in the reference framework be implemented in the daily life of the classroom? This year's Teacher Appreciation Week, to be held from February 6 to 10, is a perfect opportunity to reflect on these questions. In addition, this edition of *Schoolscapes* features the experiences of both a preschool and an elementary school teacher who have daily hands-on experience with the reform.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all teachers across Québec and wish you a great Teacher Appreciation Week!

Colette Boucher

Gilbert Moisan, Service de la recherche

Direction de la recherche, des statistiques et des indicateurs, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

THE FAMILY AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The results of several research projects conducted as part of a concerted effort to study the family and parental responsibilities were recently released.

In the past few decades, Québec society has undergone a number of changes that have had an impact on the family: a reappraisal of the institution of marriage, changes in the average number of children per family, the transformation of the traditional roles played by parents, increased cultural diversity, the adoption of new values, and the calling into question of certain traditional values. This is the backdrop before which 11 Québec ministries and agencies, including the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, supported research projects to study the following:

- Measures and actions to help parents in Québec and elsewhere develop parenting skills at every stage of life
- Possible legal adaptations to the new family context and, where possible, the fundamental values on which these adaptations should be based
- The role of public services, especially health and social services, education and childcare services, with respect to parental responsibilities
- Various past experiences involving concerted efforts to support families and the observations or principles needed to achieve more effective action

Five teams received research grants:

- André Beaudoin and his team, Université Laval: Psychosocial support services for parents experiencing difficulties
- Carl Lacharité and his team, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières: Services offered to at-risk families and families with difficulties: conceptual models, strategies for action and ways of meeting parents' needs
- Denise Lemieux and her team, INRS – Urbanisation, culture et société: Parenting in family community organizations: experiences, knowledge and support
- Françoise-Romaine Ouellette and her team, INRS – Urbanisation, culture et société: Legal adaptations to the new context of international adoption
- Bernard Terrisse and his team, Université du Québec à Montréal: Information and parenting skills training: needs of parents of young children in Québec (0-12 years) and the ability of the services offered to meet these needs

The complete research reports can be downloaded from the following site:
<http://www.fqrcs.gouv.qc.ca>
 (click on "Diffusion de la recherche," then "Rapports de recherche").

SCHOOLSCAPES

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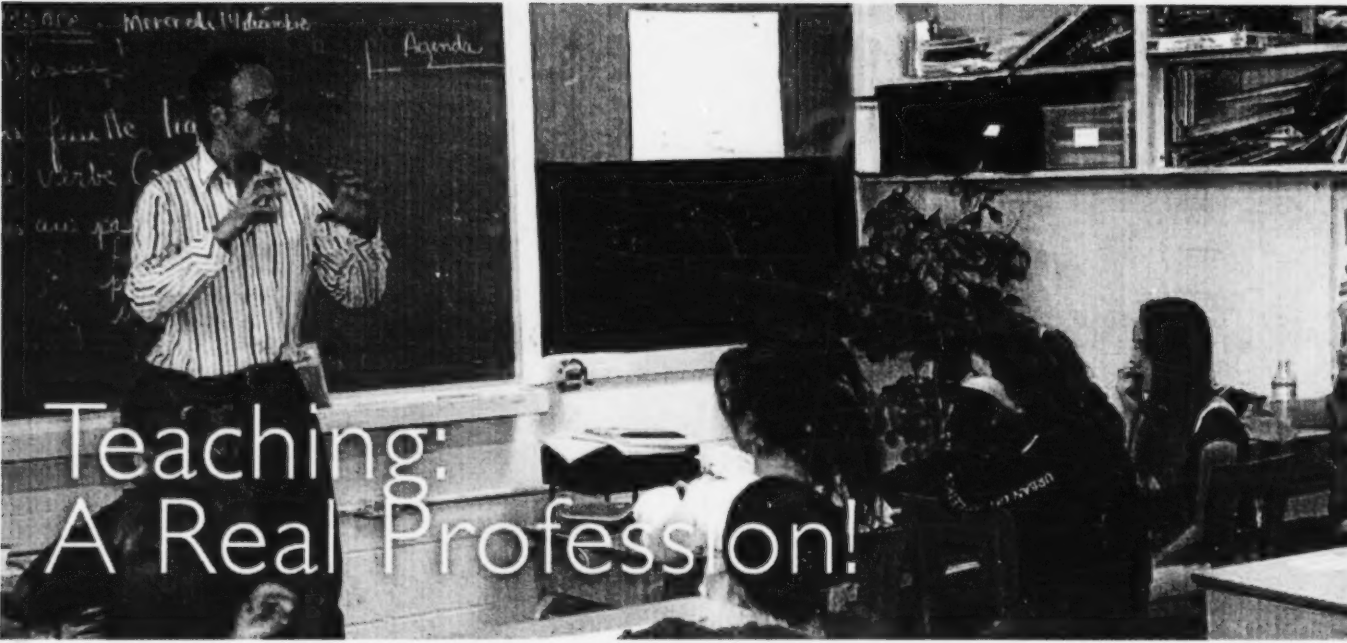
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Teaching: A Real Profession!

Réjane Bougé

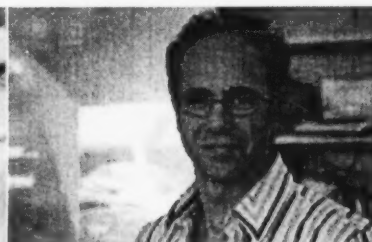
Technolitterart.com

According to the reference framework for professional competencies now recommended for Québec teachers in light of the education reform, an occupation becomes a profession when its practitioners have achieved a certain level of competency. This is an accurate reflection of the spirit of the reform. Developing learning situations adapted to the students in question, integrating information technologies, involving students in original research activities, managing heterogeneous groups are all principles in the framework that require us to change the way we do things and to make adjustments on a daily basis. *Schoolscapes* met with two teachers who subscribe to this theory and apply it with enthusiasm.

François Couture has more than one project up his sleeve! "Atteins ton sommet! Reach your summit!" is the title of the most ambitious one yet, implemented two years ago at St. Mary's elementary school. For the past 15 years, Couture has been working in French immersion at the Riverside School Board, where he acts as both French, second language, and remedial teacher. The aim of the huge project, which was very well received by both teachers and students, was to symbolically reach the summit of each continent. Blending folk dance and legends from different countries, the project involved a combination of literature, visual art and dance. François Couture has never been one to use textbooks in class. Projects have been a natural source of experimentation for a number of years, and he uses them all year long. "This being said, I think about my work in the evening. The reform definitely requires an

intellectual effort on the part of teachers," says Couture, who sails effortlessly through the socioconstructivist approach and cross-curricular competencies. "Differentiation and multiple intelligence are among the many wonderful concepts at our disposal, the many wonderful tools, but we need to remember that they are not an end in themselves."

The project he is working on now is called *technolitterart.com*. Aimed at students in all three cycles, it started with reading circles. "That's where the students first explored literature and informative texts." He then decided to have them write a story in English and French. As part of the *Culture in the Schools* program, his students will be getting help from writers. They will also be meeting with professional illustrators, who will give them tips on how to illustrate their story with sketches, watercolours and other



François Couture, teacher at St. Mary's elementary school.

techniques. Lastly, after recording the text, they will digitize their work to make it easier to read. They will also learn binding techniques because, as Couture says, "books are an important resource in our technological world." Technolitterart.com will be a wonderful blend of reading, writing, visual arts and new technologies, and will give rise to hundreds of stories on electronic media. It goes without saying that this project will help the students at St. Mary's, which is in a disadvantaged community, develop effective reading and writing strategies.

In addition to working at St. Mary's, for the past three years François Couture has been visiting sectors of the south shore of Montréal covered by his school board to help other teachers integrate new technologies in the classroom and to support them in their initiatives. The project is called Profs envol. "Riverside regularly hires university researchers to validate what is happening in the schools," Couture notes. He is enthusiastic and dreams of the day when socioconstructivism will be included in the teacher training curriculum. "It will help teachers understand the Québec Education Program and work with it."

A visit to preschool

Annie Vigneault has been a teacher for 13 years and subscribes to some of these principles. In her preschool class at École Le Carrousel in Sainte-Brigitte-des-Saults near Drummondville, she practises instructional differentiation. "Before the students even enter the classroom, I have prepared a strategy. If there are more boys than girls, we spend more time in the gym. If there are more younger than older students, I adapt the activities. I work at different levels at the same time, for example, I don't use the same puzzles for the entire class. This approach allows me to work at the student's level. Everything is adapted." She has also refined her tools over time. "At first, I used the portfolio almost exclusively for pasting pictures. Now, it is an important indicator of progress for both the students and their parents. It's all a question of attitude," says Vigneault. Her approach has changed because she gets to observe the students more, another advantage of the reform. Vigneault sees the reform as an important source of new energy. "Of course, it takes effort!" she says, enthusiastically. And if you think that new technologies cannot be integrated into activities for preschool students, think again! Vigneault has successfully used digital cameras and Web sites in her learning activities.



In this new context, her relationships with school staff have also changed. When Annie Vigneault detects problems in phonological awareness exercises, she invites remedial teachers and psychoeducators to the classroom. "Everyone shares the same space. There are no exclusions, no labels. Parents are happy with this approach. They are now more involved as active partners." This being said, Vigneault believes that preschool students with difficulties are not given enough timely support.

"Generally speaking, this new method forces me to be more creative, while honing my professional judgment," says Vigneault, who believes she is privileged to be able to work in a small school where she can see her students progress through the different cycles. ❧

We all know that reading is an essential ingredient for improving academic success. The provincial conference on books and reading, to be held in Montréal on April 3 and 4 as part of the action plan on reading in school launched in January 2005, is an eloquent illustration of this. Workers in the field, especially teachers (of all subjects) and library staff, to whom this conference is addressed in particular, should leave the conference better equipped to play an active role as promoters of reading and culture.

Readers for life

"We believe it is essential to address people who are in direct contact with young people," says Marie-France Laberge, who collaborated on the action plan and is coordinating the event. "Ties need to be strengthened—between the home and the school, for example. We need to increase the participation of volunteer parents in libraries and to adjust librarians' tasks to what is happening in the classroom." Of

course, there will be guest speakers, workshops and roundtable discussions at the conference, but Marie-France Laberge insists that it will be informal. "Even academics have expressed an interest in discussing the issues and avoiding the formalities. So in addition to researchers, we also invited people from different communities who will be there to answer 'real questions.'"

The "real" questions are those that teachers ask themselves every day: "Should I add Harlequin romances and Goosebumps to my reading list? Are they literature? Do I have to talk about the classics? Can I use comic books and Mangas to capture my students' interest? What titles should be in my classroom library?" To answer all of these questions, we have invited booksellers, authors, illustrators and journalists: in short, people who offer an eclectic view of our culture. For example, Jean Dion, who writes a sports column for *Le Devoir*, will be there, as well as Jacques Godbout, who will be there not as an author but as a storyteller to his grandchildren. "We want spontaneous and free discussion in the workshops," says Marie-France Laberge.

THE CONFERENCE

To help give the conference an innovative flavour, there will be two areas—a reading room and a broadcast room—where children, adolescents and adults will share their thoughts on video or in person. "Both young people and educators need to share their experiences and ideas," says Marie-France Laberge. "Our main goal is to inspire participants to inspire others." The 700 people who attend the two-day conference cannot fail to leave excited, more aware of the resources available to them and ready for action. They can then implement initiatives to help young people, and especially young boys, learn to enjoy reading and acquire the habit for life! ❧

Additional information about the conference
And what are you reading?
is available on the Web site of the
Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir
et du Sport.
www.mels.gouv.qc.ca

Send your questions to:
marie-france.laberge@mels.gouv.qc.ca



By Marie-Hélène Giguère

Leadership, Guidance and the Education Reform

What is a leader? How can a leader implement a change as fast as the education reform? Various suggestions were made at last October's provincial meeting on Steering Change: a Question of Leadership and Support.

Leaders are people who care about the quality of professional practices. They call things by name and are unafraid to raise problems. They clearly state their objectives and encourage their team to adopt a shared vision of the situation," said Pierre Colletette, guest speaker, in his video appearance.

Faculty member of the administrative sciences department at the Université du Québec en Outaouais, Pierre Colletette studies organizational change management, power, leadership and authority. Author of numerous works, Colletette has been a consultant in Canada and Europe since the early 1990s.

Since 2002, Pierre Colletette has helped Christine Labelle, principal at École secondaire Cité étudiante de la Haute-Gatineau, Commission scolaire des Hauts-Bois-de-l'Outaouais, implement the education reform in her school.

According to Labelle, the data collected was very informative. "For example, we learned that only 25 per cent of our teachers knew about and made use of educational practices in which students are active participants. This observation revealed a need and raised a question: How could this be? We immediately got to work!"

Leadership

Pierre Colletette's guidance model is very clear: "What leaders do not do is believe that people will take action once they have become aware of something. Leaders must take action, in conjunction with their team."

Labelle and her school's success plan committee (made up of administrators, teachers, nonteaching professionals and support staff) consulted the school team and established four orientations based on the three missions of Québec schools—to instruct, socialize and provide qualifications. "All of the orientations have more or less the same objective: to foster student success and retention. We established a single objective and a clear target for each of the orientations, then we set up a discussion forum," she explains.

"Four orientations, four objectives, four discussion forums. The forums, moderated by an administrator, are also made up of teachers, nonteaching professionals and support staff. At least 23 of our 75 staff members participate," Labelle adds.



Christine Labelle (middle) made important first steps in the education reform in her school, the Cité étudiante de la Haute-Gatineau.

Guidance

Labelle makes a distinction between guidance and supervision. "At first, I sat in on every discussion forum. We identified challenges and targets, and established strategies that could be measured using success indicators. I have always been attentive to people's needs: training sessions, collaboration, technical support (e.g. tools, checklists). That's guidance," she explains.

She believes in supervising teachers. "I meet with each teacher at the beginning of the school year to identify a challenge related to one of the 12 professional competencies. Once again, the approach is thorough: challenge, target, strategies and success indicators. We meet again in the spring to see whether the objective has been achieved, why or why not, and so on," explains the principal.

Thoroughness and modesty

"Changes are made through an act of power. A school principal is not a workshop leader or a coordinator. Leaders must ensure that what needs to be done gets done," says Pierre Colletette.

For Christine Labelle, authority in leadership involves managing personnel. "Of course, like in every other area, there are some who resist more than others, in which case, when I meet with them at the beginning of the year, I identify the professional competency they are to develop myself. But, for the most part, teachers set their own challenges, which gives them a sense of pride and accomplishment. They give off an energy that motivates the entire group."

In his presentation, Pierre Colletette was very explicit about modesty in true leaders: "Leaders are rarely in the foreground. They know that their role has nothing to do with prestige. They can work for a certain period of time, without positive reinforcement. Often, the results become apparent only in the medium or long term."

Christine Labelle and her staff had to wait two years before reaping the benefits of their efforts. "It takes determination and perseverance. The implementation of the education reform in our school (included in the success plan) was spread out over a period of three school years. It is only in the third year that we are beginning to see changes in student success and retention," she says.

Continuity

According to Christine Labelle, Pierre Colletette's approach, as implemented at École secondaire Cité étudiante de la Haute-Gatineau, is "a true problem-solving approach."

"Ultimately, the objective of guidance with respect to educational approaches in which students are active participants is to support teachers in the development of professional competencies. Today, at least 80 per cent of our teachers know about and make strategic use of educational practices in which students are active participants. The team, made up of representatives from each field, are very satisfied with the progress made and are increasingly motivated to share their practices with their peers. It's under way!" she concludes with pride. ■

THE ACTIVE MINORITY

In his research on organizational change management, Pierre Colletette has studied the concept of the active minority: "In any group, there are a few individuals who are motivated and open to change (25% to 35%), a more passive or indifferent majority (30% to 50%) and, lastly, another minority, which resists change (25% to 35%)."

In times of change, rather than attempting to convince everyone at the same time, leaders should concentrate on the minority that is open to change. "This minority will exert an influence on the passive majority, which is why it is referred to as the active minority. By working with a small core of motivated individuals, managers can influence the level of commitment of all the professionals on their team."



Also attending the provincial meeting last October were Louise Lafortune (professor of education sciences at the Université du Québec en Outaouais) and Nicole Tardif (faculty member of the department of educational management and training at the Université de Sherbrooke). They shared their thoughts on leadership and guidance in times of change. The following is a summary of their presentations.

Characteristics of a leader

According to Nicole Tardif

- Efficiency: knows he or she can produce a result.
- Vision: knows how to communicate, answer questions, share ideas, encourage and delegate.
- Ability to mobilize people: stimulates, expresses recognition, provides support, establishes a relationship of trust.
- Communication: bases his or her management on communication, avoids unproductive stress and confusion, listens to people.
- Enthusiasm about learning: believes in ongoing training, develops a support structure.
- Agent of change: provides support and supervision, sets and maintains a course, models, takes calculated risks.

"Of course, no individual can have all of these qualities, but a team can! A leader is a motivator," concludes Tardif.

According to Louise Lafortune

- Leaders influence the learning and evaluation process. They are aware that there are many ways of interpreting the context of change. The leader's role is different because the context of change is imposed.
- Educational leaders can influence the level of commitment by allowing their team members to share their authority and power.
- Educational leadership is a process, an influence. It takes beliefs, practices, thoughts and actions and creates a consistent whole.
- Educational leaders develop competencies in educational culture, reflective practices and ethics.

Practical applications of guidance

According to Nicole Tardif

- Training and action: carrying out projects and solving problems require a three-step approach: theory, action, review.
- Accounts of practices and comparison: enrich content, analyze the account on the basis of a theory.
- Individualized learning plans: foster accountability accompanied by the necessary authority, i.e. form small groups and hold personalized meetings.
- Learning cells: each school manages professional development activities based on interest.

According to Louise Lafortune

- Educational leaders recognize resistance and its effects.
- In situations of change, educational leaders determine, explain and discuss requirements.
- Educational leaders repeat certain gestures and work with small groups.

More from the experts

Nicole Tardif

- Take care of new arrivals.
- Apply the knowledge-understanding-adherence-application method.
- Remain open to networking and discussion.

Louise Lafortune

- Be creative and open-minded.
- Take calculated risks, tolerate ambiguity.
- Rely heavily on teamwork.

The Commission scolaire de la Moyenne-Côte-Nord:

Profile

The Commission scolaire de la Moyenne-Côte-Nord serves 760 students, 16 per cent of them of Native origin, and covers a territory of 250 km. It is the second smallest school board in Québec in terms of population. Several of its schools have multilevel classes. Well on its way in the implementation of the education reform, the Commission scolaire de la Moyenne-Côte-Nord has one target school, one school participating in the *New Approaches New Solutions* intervention strategy and three schools participating in the *Écoles éloignées en réseau* program.

Structure

In order to meet the needs of the education reform, the Commission scolaire de la Moyenne-Côte-Nord adopted a highly efficient administrative structure. "We have dynamic leaders, steady leaders and strategic leaders," explains Mario Cyr, school principal and education consultant. The Commission scolaire de la Moyenne-Côte-Nord includes a director of educational services, an elementary-level teacher-resource person, a secondary-level teacher-resource person, an education consultant assigned to the reform, a special education consultant and a multidisciplinary education consultant, who is also a RÉCIT* animator.

Procedure

"First, we ask all teachers new to our school board to undergo training," says Éric Faguy, school principal and education consultant. They are trained in the following three areas: understanding the Québec Education Program, planning learning situations, and working with the reference framework for evaluation. "We also invest a lot of time in creating tools that teachers can adapt to their specific needs. This way we are certain that the essential knowledge is integrated into the project-based teaching approach," says Cyr.

Chain reaction

"What is extraordinary is that helping teachers achieve success in the implementation of the Québec Education Program allows us to go even farther. For example, after experimenting with new teaching practices, teachers asked us to make changes to our educational organization," concludes Cyr.

Conditions for success

"The school board must be involved. For example, we participate actively in the training of resource persons," says Éric Faguy. In his opinion, certain characteristics, such as a thorough knowledge of staff and clientele, a simple structure and, lastly, an organization that is people-oriented, open and focused on the community are determining factors in the successful implementation of the education reform in a school board. "It is essential to create a climate of trust. We respect the different paces at which people work and set time aside for concerted action. We have also created a monitoring and steering committee," adds Mario Cyr.

* Réseau pour le développement des Compétences par l'Intégration des Technologies

By Eve Krakow

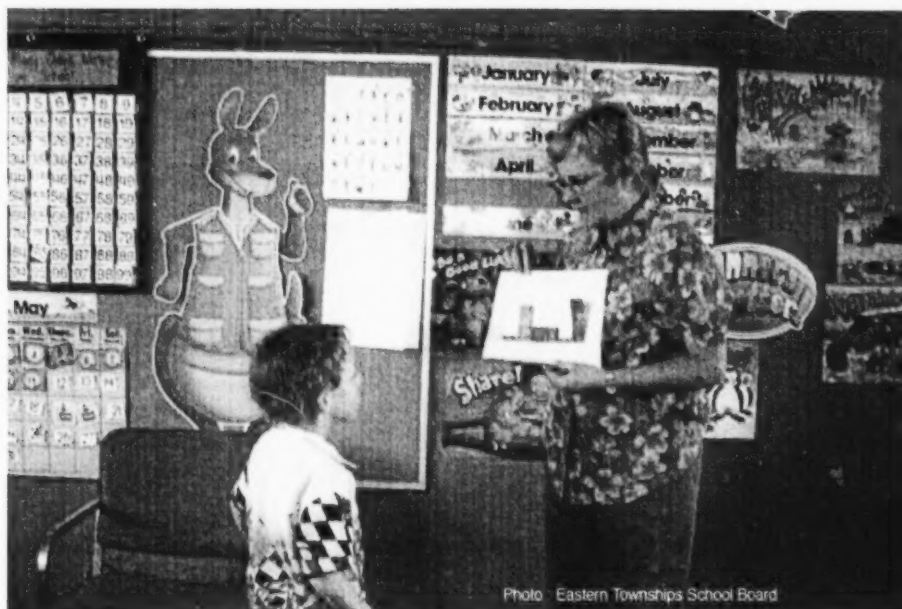


Photo: Eastern Townships School Board

The Process

START stands for School's Targets, Achievement and Results Team. Each year, it targets a limited number of schools. First, the team leaders meet with the principals. "We explain that we're there to support them in the priorities they set for themselves," explains Eva Lettner, school principal and current START team leader. "We give them a list of questions they can review with their staff, and we collect pertinent information from the school to get a sense of its culture."

Then, the team meets with the school staff to help them set priorities. Everyone brainstorms and discusses the end results they would like to see. "It's a democratic process," says John Palov, teacher and START team member. "After brainstorming, all teachers and staff vote to determine one or two priorities." To date, elementary and secondary schools have chosen issues such as improving math outcomes, implementing balanced literacy to enhance reading and writing outcomes, keeping at-risk kids in school, improving school spirit and, of course, implementing the Québec Education Program.

The project began with a director general who wanted to make things happen. "Teachers were asking for more support in the schools," recalls Paulette Losier, a school principal and former START team leader. "What they had in mind was more money. But the DG, Ronald Canuel, wanted something more sustainable. He had a vision of a different kind of leadership, one of empowerment to teachers in schools."

So two principals were given a mandate: "To improve the learning environment of our schools and integrate a culture of change and adaptation to the individual needs of all students; and to assist the administrators and their staff in developing, enhancing, coordinating, and communicating educational and non-educational improvement activities that will support improvement and change." Jobs were posted, teachers applied and team members were chosen. The team then developed its own process. "We hit the ground running," says Losier.

The START team looks at how it can best support the school, and proposes measures and a timeline to the staff. Support measures might include giving workshops, mentoring teachers on an individual basis, modeling new teaching strategies, conducting in-class observations and giving feedback, conducting research so as to pass on materials and data to teachers, or playing the role of the critical friend. The team reports to the school and the school board on a regular basis. At the end of the year, it collects results and reports evidence of change.

Stumbling Blocks

Lettner admits that there have been some stumbling blocks along the way. For example, often, school staff are apprehensive at first. "They're not sure what to make of us—are we spies for the board? But that feeling goes away once they get to know us and realize we're there to support them, not evaluate them, and to build on their strengths."

Another challenge is sustainability. "We're in the school for one academic year. When we leave, we're counting on the pedagogical leader to carry on the priorities. That's very hard when you have high staff turnover or when principals are moving from one school to another." To counter this problem, the school board allocates a \$10 000 grant to the school once the START team leaves. "This can be used to purchase materials, to release teachers for planning, etc. The principal reports to the DG twice a year on how the priorities have been sustained." Yet she adds that increasingly, schools are finding other sources of funding as well, such as PDIGs (Pedagogical Development and Innovation Grants).

Distance is another concern. "Our school board covers an area the size of Belgium," notes Lettner. They try to have schools located near each other cluster together for workshops and discussions among cycle teachers, and to limit travel costs by car-pooling.

Evidence of Change

Suzanne Cady, a teacher and START team member, says evidence of change can be measured on three levels: in the classroom, in the whole school, and in the system.

In the classroom, teachers are more receptive to changing the learning environment, "as long as we work through new strategies of classroom management," she adds. One example is the implementation of guided reading lessons. As well, learners are more independent (strategies include setting up literature circles and activity centers), and teachers are more confident about sharing their experiences in implementing the QEP.

When it comes to the whole school, priorities often have to do with involving parents and the community. Changes include moving from traditional parent-teacher interviews to student-led conferences, from traditional marking to using portfolios, and from being reactive to becoming pro-active (for example, with an anti-bullying campaign).

On a system level, the START team helps information flow by communicating the concerns of the educators and schools they support to the school board. Based on this feedback, the board's directors have modified their practices, such as increasing their visibility in schools.

Best Practices

Another tangible result is the "Great Ideas Worth Sharing" initiative. Best practices collected from different schools have been burned onto a CD, distributed to all schools, and will soon be posted on the school board's Web site.

Reflective practice is also important within the team. The members meet regularly to share ideas and concerns, and to keep informed of what is going on in each school. They keep up to date on professional readings, and attend conferences and workshops to acquire the tools they need to support their peers.

Of course, this endeavor would not be possible without the school board's commitment and investment: team members are released from their regular duties for the duration of the school year. They also have a modest budget to cover travel expenses and to occasionally release teachers in the schools where they are working. Lettner says it all stems from the DG's original vision: "Ronald Canuel realized that in order for change to happen, you need to nurture and support it. We are teachers assisting teachers, administrators assisting administrators." ■



Photo: Eglam Township School Board

A guide for schools

Among other things, the guide specifies who is responsible for the various types of evaluation, as well as the prescribed reference materials and those suggested for information purposes. Aline Buron points out that not everything is spelled out in the ministerial frameworks that address evaluation and that, consequently, the schools have considerable leeway in the evaluation of learning.



Diane Provençal, principal at École Félix-Leclerc, who spoke at the provincial meeting about her experiences, observed that in workshops held

last year, a number of participants were surprised to learn that the policy on evaluation adopted by the Ministère in 2003 was an orientation document and was therefore not mandatory. She added that everyone considers the policy mandatory to a certain degree. Yet it gives leeway to the different evaluators.

Along the same lines, Aline Buron points out that, although the Basic School Regulation contains provisions concerning evaluation and the certification of studies which are mandatory, these provisions do not cover every aspect of evaluation by the schools or the school boards. In addition, for some aspects that are covered, such as notices to parents, the Basic School Regulation gives the school and the school board a certain latitude. "There are mandatory provisions in the Basic School Regulation, but there are also a number of possibilities," says Aline Buron. "The school may decide on the number and nature of the subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies that will be evaluated and made known to parents in the different report cards." In the first years of the reform at the elementary level, Diane Provençal did not insist that her teachers include every competency in the report card. "I preferred to omit information that was not a true reflection of reality," she adds.



Photo 3: Aline Buron, principal of École Félix-Leclerc, who spoke at the provincial meeting about her experiences.

Special measures

Diane Provençal emphasizes the importance of "reading the community" before making choices concerning evaluation standards and methods, as well as the need to set priorities. It is not possible to change everything at once, and the needs of the community must be considered. The administration must be able to identify the aspects of evaluation that the school team is prepared to change. She therefore decided to make a series of small changes. For example, after studying students' results for June 2004 and discovering that "some cross-curricular competencies had not been sufficiently evaluated, that there was no continuity in the cycle," she addressed the situation at the beginning of the next school year and asked the cycle teams to prepare an evaluation plan for the cross-curricular competencies over the course of the cycle, to be presented in early October. Diane Provençal concludes by observing that however evaluation standards and methods are developed, it is important to cover the entire evaluation process: planning, information gathering and interpretation, judgment, and decision/action.

Aline Buron adds that the school's evaluation standards and methods should be developed logically. "First, the Québec Education Program must be implemented before evaluation practices are changed. Although the Program has been applied in Secondary Cycle One, it takes time to determine the best way of evaluating learning. However, from now on, each school team should begin thinking about developing evaluation standards and methods, if only to help them understand the ministerial frameworks for the evaluation of learning and to assess the situation."

In addition to helping schools establish their own evaluation standards and methods, the guide presents guidelines to help schools and school boards develop rules regarding promotion and placement. According to Diane Provençal, this process raises the following questions: When is a student deemed ready to be promoted to the next cycle? When should a student be required to spend an extra year in the cycle? What type of instructional organization best meets a student's needs? What support measures are necessary?

Meeting students' needs

Aline Buron points out that some provisions of the *Education Act* and the *Basic School Regulation* are helpful for establishing rules regarding promotion and placement. The education reform involves taking students' needs into account and fosters promotion rather than repeating a year or retaking subjects that have already been successfully completed. Other types of instructional organization are more likely to meet the different needs of students, for example, multilevel classes, decompartmentalization, specialized services, ad hoc resource groups, instructional differentiation, and so on. But, according to Aline Buron, the reference materials provided for information purposes, such as the *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* and the evaluation frameworks, emphasize "the potential of evaluation to support learning." It is therefore necessary to meet the students' needs, not only at key moments in their progress at school, but throughout the learning process. "Indeed, what is important when establishing rules regarding promotion and placement is to be clear about the conditions for promoting students, while taking account of their needs," she concludes.

The success of new evaluation practices depends on the importance evaluators place on them. Although the guide is not a step-by-step procedure, evaluators now have a tool that provides food for thought, examples and guidelines to help them in their efforts.

"The purpose," says Aline Buron, "is to encourage evaluators to think about their practices and whether they are still valid under the new Québec Education Program." However, according to both evaluation specialists, the ultimate goal is student success. ■

SCHOOL	SCHOOL AND SCHOOL BOARD	SCHOOL BOARD
Standards and methods for the evaluation of learning	Rules regarding promotion and placement	Evaluation under the responsibility of the school board and the Ministère
	Certification of studies	Recognition of learning
		Home schooling

Toward Better Planning for Learning and Evaluation

he answer, of course, is yes. Mr. Guimont reminded participants that the Basic School Regulation stipulates that teachers must provide an account of student learning in Cycle Two with regard to competencies to be developed. Moreover, he stressed that when it comes right down to it, this question addresses the progress being made in terms of these competencies. Not only do teachers have to determine the elements on which to focus to evaluate the development of competencies for a given subject, but they also have to plan the teaching in such a way as to ensure that ongoing progress is being made by their students during the cycle. In this regard, a number of workshop leaders at the training session provided opportunities for participants to reflect on ways to attain this objective.

A true dynamic of competency development

In order for teachers to construct a continuum of learning and evaluation situations, it is suggested that they vary a number of parameters to gradually increase the level of difficulty in situations presented to students. These interdependent parameters are: the learning context and its methods for being carried out, the structuring of the resources and the establishment of a reflective process.

Bearing this in mind, let us imagine for a moment that we are asking a student to analyze the implications of having people or groups with different religious and secular beliefs live together. This question naturally requires the student to work hard at utilizing his or her competencies and problem-solving abilities. For a Secondary V student to know how to judge up to what point expression of religious views is acceptable in public, the competencies would have to be developed starting in Elementary Cycle One. "This type of process cannot be improvised," says Denis Watters, coordinator of the editorial team for the Ethics and Religious Culture program. Presenting such problems to students requires long-term planning, with gradual progression to greater degrees of complexity, in such a way as to have students transfer competencies from one situation to another. This is especially true when the contexts have to be varied, as students will then also have to be presented with challenges within their reach so as to acquire new knowledge by relying on prior learning.

Lise Ouellet, who is in charge of French program at the Ministère, reminded participants that both the internal and external resources that are available to students must be organized throughout the school system. She presented the example of vocabulary to illustrate her



Helpful Disadvantaged

What if the education reform came with its own solutions? This question formed the basis for the team of resource persons of the Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin, made up of 24 education consultants, in their initiative to open up new avenues. The sizable and dynamic team works on the South Shore of Montréal and sees to the needs of 36 000 students, 7 000 of them from disadvantaged communities.

At the training session, several members of the school board spoke of the effectiveness of new synergies. First, consultants have established close relations with certain institutions, allowing them to offer personalized guidance (for individuals or teams) of a specific or more general nature. The team of education consultants and administrators has also integrated the interdisciplinarity now required of teachers into its practices and established connections between the elementary and secondary levels. Connections must be made at the content level. Generally speaking, everything is in place to encourage teachers to adhere to the principle of differentiated instruction, an important element of the reform.

"When we meet with administrators who are concerned about teaching, we already have what we need to succeed," says education consultant Céline Béland. Ginette Vincent,

assistant director of educational services, confirms the importance of working closely with administrators. "Teachers need to be given training that allows them to construct their own concepts and make connections between them while implementing the school's success plan. We must take the time to create all of these links, since they have extremely positive effects on the students."

"If a teacher organizes his or her class on the basis of students' characteristics and what they have already learned, 95 per cent of students can succeed," says education consultant France Blouin, who also says she wants to break down the barriers between special education and the regular sector. "My first priority is to meet teachers' needs," says Fernande Montpetit, also an education consultant. "After seven years, teachers are becoming increasingly familiar with the reform, but they need help applying it. When I am in the classroom, there is more feedback and I can help teachers evaluate students during the learning process. I also recommend creating a cooperation council in the class."

In our opinion, Louis Gendron, director of educational services, has the last word: "Sometimes you have to waste time in order to save time!" ■



From left to right: Ginette Vincent, assistant director of educational services, and Céline Béland, education consultant, at a training session for the Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin.



France Blouin, education consultant, at a training session for the Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin.



Louis Gendron, director of educational services, at a training session for the Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin.

point: there has to be a progression in the accurate use of words in their many contexts. The concept of synonym would then take on greater meaning for students over the years. Teachers must bear in mind that they are gradually building networks, not only to support student learning, but also to foster discussion with their colleagues and build the necessary bridges with other subjects. Mihran Dijknavorian, who is in charge of the mathematics program, stated that giving students the opportunity to become aware of their learning enables them to embark on a reflective process. This would be beneficial for future learning.

With regard to the traditional means of evaluating students, which has had detrimental effects, including the compartmentalization of knowledge, Christian Rousseau, in charge of research and development in evaluation, proposes that they be replaced by a learning and evaluation file focused on each competency. This would be necessary according to Rousseau, "because we no longer check along the way whether objectives have been achieved, but we implement mechanisms so that all students can achieve the highest level of competency possible. Above all, we must never lose sight of this new objective." ■

On the first day, participants in the English-sector workshop discussed the plans of schools and school boards for developing and evaluating competencies in keeping with the aims and orientations of the education reform and the implementation of the Québec Education Program (QEP). The second day was spent developing, discussing and presenting action plans in this regard.

During a discussion on day one, participants indicated that school boards and school teams have undertaken a variety of steps to assist and prepare secondary school teachers in planning learning and evaluation opportunities for students. They include: sharing and modelling best practices; structuring timetables to set up common times for teachers to meet; creating networking opportunities; teacher research; and distributing information and tools, such as the Town Hall videos and materials developed by Leading English Education And Resource Network (LEARN).

There was also discussion of three interrelated elements that need to be in place for competency to develop: exercising competency while performing the task, awareness as learners and the need for reflection, and the ability to reorganize resources. Other elements include the importance of making strategic decisions, having clearly defined goals, continuity, and having criteria for competency development and evaluation.

Finally, the questions that emerged regarding actions that school boards and school teams need to take were: Are conditions in place to ensure that teachers develop the necessary skills for planning learning and evaluation situations? What types of situations and environments are conducive for teachers to develop their planning skills? How can teachers' reflection on themselves as learners become an integral part of the process? How can we ensure that there

are opportunities to make effective use of resources in new ways?

On day two, participants worked in groups to develop action plans for supporting teachers in their planning of learning and evaluation situations. Each group drew on existing and newly acquired resources to examine the situation in their respective schools and actions currently underway. "The complex task in which they were engaged placed them in a context for developing their skills to provide support and guidance to the school personnel in their milieus," commented Avril Aitken, one of the workshop's facilitators. She provides support and guidance to participants from English-language boards and organizations for the *Accompagnement-recherche-formation* project, headed by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport in collaboration with the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières.

The action plans that each group presented outlined the steps to be taken and the resources needed for implementation. They also stressed the importance of ensuring that teachers learn through action and that they receive feedback. In addition, each plan took into account the need to target the development of teachers' skills, diagnose the current situation, act according to the community's needs in an ongoing and supportive way, and integrate evaluation into the process.

Ideas for action plans included intervention plans to guide teachers in developing and honing their planning skills, fostering autonomy and collaboration in school teams, and building a learning community by working mainly with school principals. ■

Those who know Robert Goyette are not surprised to hear him talk about the importance for teachers to become learners. Goyette began his career as an elementary school physical education teacher; then spent more than 10 years in teacher training at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Passionate about learning and professional development, his interest in teaching led him to complete a doctoral degree in psychoeducation. Today he is a teaching consultant and interim coordinator of the physical education and health program at the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport.

"I noticed that teachers often think they are being asked to make a clean slate of their professional practices. Their impression of the reform is often tainted by hearsay or less-than-exciting media reports. They all have their own interpretation of the goals of the Program, without necessarily understanding the basic premises of the reform. Some see the challenge as daunting, while others see it as yet another step in a gradual process of change."

Solidarity through concerted action

"If the education reform is to be successful, the establishment of professional solidarity is essential," says Robert Goyette. To be able to develop new ways of doing things, he believes that physical education teachers must ensure the quality of their expertise and create a climate of cooperation, not only with colleagues in other subjects, but within their field. "At the secondary level, there are several partners in any given department, and there is room to develop team spirit, but everyone must be willing. This culture has to be implemented and re-implemented with every new group of teachers."

Santé globale,* developed in Estrie, is a good example of an extracurricular program that can be used to establish solidarity in a school. This collaborative effort of teachers, administrators and parents gradually spread from the elementary to the secondary level, then to increasingly remote regions. The program fosters team spirit, the setting of examples, modelling and inspiration. "It's people who create esprit de corps among professionals. An administrative

structure may support solidarity, but it must stem from a desire to work together to effect change. If the only achievement of this approach were the creation of a spirit of solidarity based on the success of students and professionals, it would still be encouraging."

When Robert Goyette learned about work being done by key physical education teachers in Longueuil,* he observed that their approach made it possible to share with other educators the responsibility for encouraging and supporting change. "A key educator is a colleague who initiates change, a model with strengths and limitations. It is a good idea to present several models of teachers at different points in the process. Like children, who learn at different rates, teachers and students are also individuals. By encouraging teachers to rediscover the art of learning, we are helping them gain a better understanding of students."



* See "From Theory to Practice," on page 13.1

A stimulating concept

An original concept, that of "key teacher," transformed our perception of change. What had at first appeared troublesome became a stimulus in about 10 secondary schools in the Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin in Longueuil.

Thanks to this concept, the education reform at the secondary level is something that physical education teachers will have experienced "in the lab" before students are introduced to it in the fall.

Key teachers

Conceived in a hallway discussion, the idea of key teachers developed into the process of sending ambassadors to help teachers understand the education reform. Selected by his or her peers, the key teacher in each secondary school acts as liaison between his or her colleagues and the school board. The key teacher is given a few hours each week to act as resource person. Jean-François Mouton, spokesperson for the physical education and health program, introduced key teachers to new activities inspired by the reform. In his "lab experiment," the teachers tested his training program.

"It has taken more than two years," explains Mouton. "We needed to develop tools and validate program content. The key teachers identified weak spots and we were able to prevent problems."

A five-step process

1. The spokesperson plans training activities.
2. He or she presents them to the key teachers and has them participate.
3. He or she makes the necessary changes and prepares documentation for the meeting with all teachers of the subject.
4. The spokesperson and key teachers conduct the meeting.
5. The key teachers become resource persons in their school.

Stéphane Bouthillier, a key teacher, was thrilled with the experience. "I like to find information and new challenges in my work," he says. "When my colleagues chose me to replace Jean-François Mouton during his absence, I jumped at the chance."

Bouthillier discovered that he had an ability to adapt, thanks in part to his experience with special classes. When he saw his colleagues' reaction to change, he understood that some of them felt that their perceptions and teaching approaches were being judged. "We have to change how we operate and examine our understanding of physical education." Teachers are at different stages in the process and the learning paradigm changes familiar roles and teaching tasks. In Bouthillier's opinion, teachers must remain open and keep their eyes on the target, i.e. better conditions for learning.

"As a key teacher, I sometimes had a different point of view, but at the same time my view as a teacher was just as valid as anyone else's." Bouthillier says he really appreciated the support of other key teachers when training began in 2004.

Bouthillier and Mouton recognize that, despite teachers' natural apprehension, the change is worth it. The reform has led to many discussions among teachers and Mouton observes that there is more of a team spirit and that things are developing positively. He is satisfied with the greater level of accountability that has come from reflection and validation. He admits that things are not perfect and that there are still adjustments to be made, in evaluation for instance.

"In my work as spokesperson, I meet with all teachers and I have a real sense of belonging. I also feel like I am doing something for the profession. It's a good feeling. I can influence key educators, who then influence all teachers, which has a positive effect in the gym. It's very stimulating."

Santé globale: Encouraging physical activity

After more than 30 years in teaching, Jacques Duquette is still passionate about his job teaching physical education at École Laporte and his role as one of the creators of the *Santé globale* program, which began in Estrie in 1997.

"I am a physical education teacher at heart," says Duquette, who was concerned that his youngest son, then in Elementary 3, was not being given enough hours of physical activity in his school. "My son was the impetus for developing the program."

Duquette and his wife, Marthe Giguère, who has been teaching at École Desranleau her entire career, believe so strongly in the importance of making children accountable for adopting healthy lifestyle habits that they have invested significantly in the program of extracurricular activities. They devote innumerable hours to the program, bringing groups of students on mountain trips,

leading activities for people interested in offering the program in other schools and participating in fundraising and promotional activities.

The couple benefited from the experience of education consultant Jacques Clément and from the support of Marc Perron and Ghyslain Pouliot. In 1998-1999, an initial group of 20 students at École Desranleau participated in the *Santé globale* program. One year later, there were other groups and École secondaire du Triolet decided to join the program, seeing in it the potential to prevent students from dropping out of school.

Duquette proudly points out that all students admitted to the program in Secondary I at École du Triolet in 1999 have graduated: not one of them dropped out!

There are now 2000 kindergarten-through-Secondary-V-students in the program and more schools keep joining. Schools in Estrie have mountains nearby, but schools in other regions are not as fortunate, and the program encourages local colour. Some schools have opted for horseback riding or climbing walls or high ropes. They use pools, rivers or skating rinks to introduce physical activity in different contexts in order to stimulate cross-curricular competencies.

"The most wonderful thing is to see students learn about themselves," says Giguère when asked what she gets out of her efforts. "It's not about performance. The program enables students to make choices at different levels. The process is based on a variety of experiences. It also helps establish relationships with parents. Everyone has a role to play."

Pierre-Yves Lauzon, Secondary V student at École du Triolet, spoke about his five years in the program. He was given the opportunity to participate in activities such as climbing, deep-sea

diving, rafting, mountain-biking and dog-sledding. "By doing physical activity almost every morning, I come to class more alert. *Santé globale* is based for the most part on cooperation and autonomy, and it allowed me to considerably improve both of these aspects. ... I believe that physical activity can help reduce the dropout rate. Some people watch hockey, but I'm a fan of *Santé globale*. ❏

For further information,
consult the February-March 2006 issue of
Vie pédagogique
(no. 138), devoted to physical fitness.

Learning to learn as professionals

"It's been a long time since we have had the opportunity to discuss professional challenges and our own learning path as teachers or guides. How am I developing as a professional? How can I keep my learning up to date? What am I prepared to do? How am I prepared to change?"

In Goyette's opinion, teachers all want their students to like school, to develop and to learn how to live a successful life. "A teacher who says, 'I want to introduce them to ...' is telling you how you can help him or her find solutions. Encouraging teachers to share their experience is more difficult. There is far too much discretion in education: some ideas deserve to be shared. We want our students to take risks in decision making, but we don't want to do the same as adult learners. Learning is not a question of age, it's a question of our attitude toward change."

Professional expertise

Robert Goyette believes that the more tools teachers have, the more attitudes and skills they contribute to helping their students, to implementing meaningful instructional differentiation. "Every educational approach has advantages and limitations and we must determine which are the best options for successfully achieving our goals."

"We need to review our professional teaching practices, read articles about learning in our field, broaden our perspective outside our field and examine the impact of our mandate." He recognizes that it is easy to slip into the comfort zone of limited choices. Some teachers are afraid

of change, others are disciples of certain set instructional formulas. "It's not novelty that makes a good educator; it's the person's ability to use a variety of methods adapted to the students' needs in order to help them learn."

Curiosity

"I believe in curiosity, open-mindedness and a critical spirit, not in criticism," says Goyette, an education consultant who is wary of myths, rumours and approximations. "Parents and teachers often react to slogans. These are often only misinterpretations resulting from an accumulation of incomplete information and resistance to change."

Our challenge as guides is to recognize teachers' individual characteristics and to listen to those who have lived through mergers, seen colleagues come and go and witnessed other changes.

"The education reform does not require teachers to conform to standard professional practices. Teachers are free to organize their classroom activities in order to foster success. Teachers convey their beliefs through their practices, and proper guidance can provide additional options adapted to their personal goals. It is important to realign our individual and collective actions in order to carry out our mandate. The education reform is based on a love of learning on the part of both teachers and students, through the sharing of well-developed and coherent practices. It's essential!" ■

By Eve Krakow

The Physics of Badminton

Brian Savoy is a physical education teacher at Riverside Regional High School, in the Central Québec School Board. He has been applying the principles of the new curriculum through a number of activities, in particular within his badminton unit.

Since the Secondary III students are studying biology, he decided to have them look at the relationship between human biology and badminton.

To begin with, Savoy went to see the biology teacher to find out what concepts students would be learning. Then in his own class, he talked to students about the muscles and physiology involved in playing badminton. He also incorporated what students were learning in biology on nutrition, by asking questions such as, "What's the best nutrition for a fast sport? How do you prepare for a good badminton class?" Savoy had students write down and discuss what they ate in the morning.

In Secondary IV, he wanted students to measure the speed of a badminton shuttle. The physics teacher assured him that the students had all the knowledge they needed to perform the experiment. Of course, the students didn't realize this right away. In badminton class, they had to choose which stroke they would use (forehand, smash), how they would measure the shuttle speed and what tools they would need.

"When you learn something, you have to know how to use it in another context," said Savoy. "At the end, the students understood this."

He said the new curriculum encourages teachers to work together, which makes the job easier. "Physical education is now part of the school. We're not just in the gym."

For the last ten years, Savoy has had Secondary V students organize a track and field meet as their end-of-year project. The students are in charge of all aspects: financing, calculating the medals, acting as sports journalists and photographers, promoting the event to the rest of the school and signing up the Secondary I to IV students. Savoy now realizes that this project fits in directly with the new curriculum. "Teachers should look at what they've done and what they can do. They may already be doing things in the spirit of the QEP." ■



By Louis-P. Huard

Since the adoption of the special education policy, a number of actions have been taken to foster student success. From now on, schools must make use of all community resources to help students develop competencies. In this context, Christine Nadon, resource person at the regional service providing support and expertise for students with language difficulties or deficiencies in the Montérégie region, and Lyne Gingras, resource person in the Capitale-Nationale and Chaudière-Appalaches regions, help local educators acquire expertise in understanding the effects of oral and written language problems on learning in order to adapt their strategies to these students' needs.

Integrating a student with language difficulties into a regular class poses a number of challenges and raises questions among teachers and other school staff about their professional activities. Christine Nadon and Lyne Gingras note that teachers' commitment and that of other school staff must be solicited with respect.

Nadon and Gingras hope to foster the development of provincial expertise in this area and to implement research and development projects. Nadon explains: "We favour guidance practices that take the professional competencies of teachers and other school staff



"We make an effort to establish partnerships between regional services and the different schools in order to facilitate follow-up and support."

Christine Nadon, resource person at the regional service providing support and expertise for students with language difficulties or deficiencies in the Montérégie region

into account. We make an effort to establish partnerships between regional services and the different schools in order to facilitate follow-up and support."

"In order to offer harmonized services and to foster consistency, we work in collaboration with the different staff members. It's hard work, and everyone involved must take the time to examine his or her methods and the community, since this is a complex process that requires the commitment of all of school staff members who work with students," observes Gingras.

"Working with teams of professionals in the field also makes it possible to think about how to offer better services and to validate the tools in use."

three years on a training project at the Ministère for students with language difficulties. The aim of this innovative project is to help schools develop ways of providing students with better guidance.

"Socioconstructivist training aims at fostering continuity and targets the development of professional competencies, which is why participants need guidance," says Nadon. The training aims at meeting the needs of participants, while taking into account their experience and the resources available. Professional competencies are constructed by thinking about and applying new knowledge.

"Our training encourages people to raise questions. It is a tool for carrying out our mandate and informing all educators," say Nadon and Gingras.

"The guidance approach allows schools to promote

The success of students with language difficulties depends on more than one person; every staff member has a role to play. Consequently, it is important that teachers on the front line feel that they have the necessary support so that they can understand the students' difficulties and develop strategies adapted to their needs. ■



Lyne Gingras, vice-president of the Centre National de l'Éducation-Apprentissage

Regional resource people must respect teachers' progress and help them enrich their knowledge.

Creating a climate of sharing and collaboration often helps players gain a better understanding of a situation and find various ways of facilitating the integration of students with language problems. For example, resource people in the Estrie and Capitale-Nationale regions worked closely with the producers of the Guide d'intervention : de l'oral à l'écrit for Cycle Two and Cycle Three students with language problems. In addition, professionals from different school boards helped develop and validate the guide. Christine Nadon and Lyne Gingras believe that their role is also to support schools and school boards, in particular through ongoing training. To this end, they have been working for the past

the development of professional competencies and ongoing training." The approach must be dynamic, flexible and adapted to the schools' needs.

Certain conditions are essential for promoting the success of students with language difficulties. Schools must be prepared to devote the necessary effort to the implementation of training sessions. This requires that school boards promote the realization of regional mandates. Regional resource people must respect teachers' progress and help them enrich their knowledge. In any guidance approach, participants are able to determine needs and develop reflective practices.

